Gas Journal

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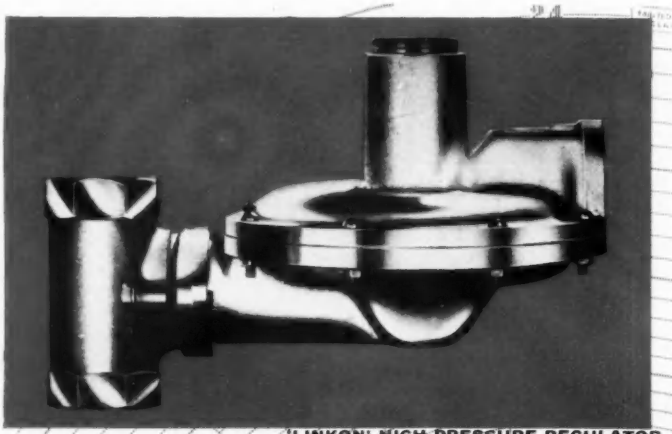

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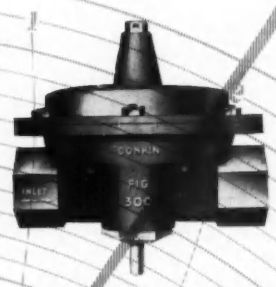

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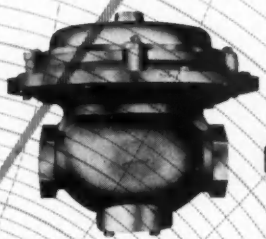

DIAPHRAGM PRESSURE REGULATOR

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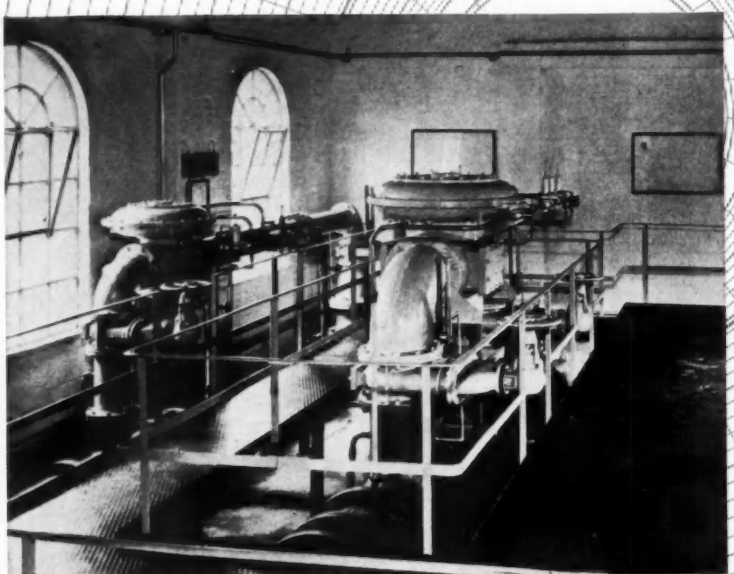

Illustration shows an 8" Volumetric Governor on the left supplying gas to a holder, and on the right a 14" Station Governor, clock controlled to give three pressures daily

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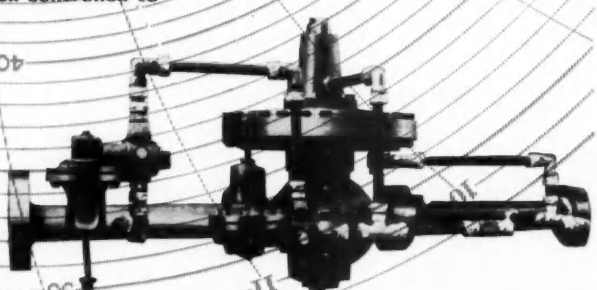

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WEDNESDAY, JULY 5, 1961

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Publishers' Notice, See Page 353, May 31, 1961.

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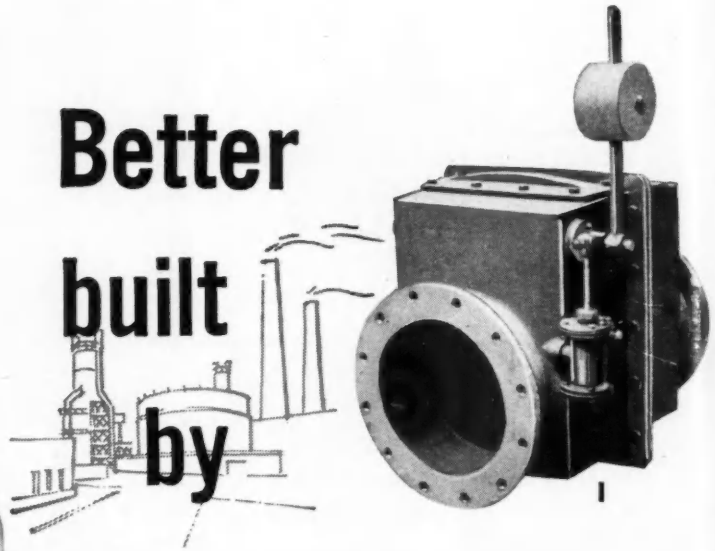

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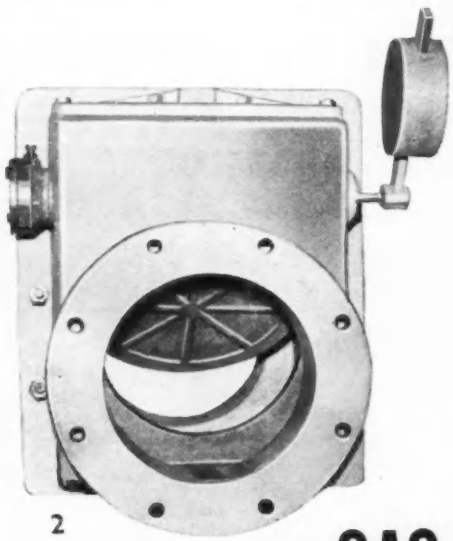

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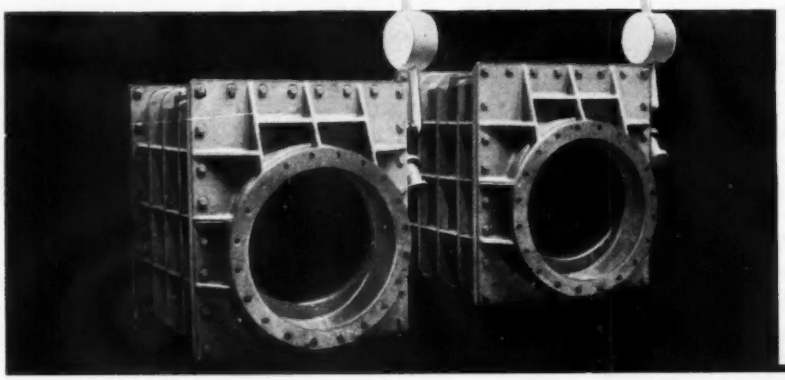

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Gas Journal

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Gas industry advertisers under fire

WE live in an age in which every individual, every business and every industry is a target for advertising. Happily for the mental and economic balance of all concerned, every intensification of the advertisers' powers of persuasion is compensated by a corresponding increase in the powers of resistance of those at whom the advertising is aimed. Nevertheless, advertising today is itself a major industry and, having regard to the tremendous temptations placed in its path, a remarkably honest and useful one. It has even developed as an art form with its own professional critics and admirers—a healthy development inasmuch as such unbiased interest tends to curb any tendency for advertising to exist as an end in itself.

No longer are advertisements (particularly those aimed at industry) designed solely to stimulate an immediate desire to purchase. They also serve to keep the advertiser's name before the readers and to associate it in the readers' minds with certain qualities; and they are important as a means of disseminating information. Thus their effectiveness can only be properly assessed by a very intimate knowledge of the advertiser's motives and his relationship with the industry concerned.

The *Advertiser's Weekly*, a newspaper indispensable to anyone even remotely concerned with advertising, has for years performed a useful service by publishing reviews of current advertisements in various fields. In its June 23 issue it turned its attention to gas industry advertising and thereby revealed how even an expert reviewer can fail to discern the climate of advertising in a field with which he is not wholly familiar, and the motives of individual advertisers.

In 'What's advertising doing for the gas industry?' Victor Markham examines not, as the title leads one to expect, the effect of the advertising placed by the Gas Council, the area boards or the gas appliance manufacturers, but advertisements in the gas Press designed to show what services the advertisers can perform for the industry.

For some reasons best known to himself the author quotes (from the 'GAS JOURNAL') a sentence which he labels 'an indication of the unsettled nature of the industry.' It is in fact from a review of a paper by J. F. Doran and warns against the dangers of failing to keep pace with customer movement. Why this should be regarded as of greater significance than the many references in our pages to exciting new developments in gasmaking and utilisation we do not know.

Mr. Markham goes on to search for advertisements which offer 'to give effective help to the industry in its hour of need.' Perhaps because he was looking for the wrong thing (the industry is not as desperate as all that!) he found them 'few and far between.'

However, he rightly praises Simon-Carves Ltd., for two layouts (one on butane plant at Guernsey and one on gas producer plant for the N.C.B.) and Audco Ltd. for one dealing with their pressurised system. But in taking Drakes Ltd. to task for a layout which devotes three-quarters of its space to the company's name and contains 'no appeal, no offer of benefit, not even an invitation to the reader to find out more about this company' Mr. Markham fails to understand that the gas industry is very familiar with what Messrs. Drakes have to offer (after all, the company has been serving the industry for well over a century), and that the company's motive in advertising is to keep its name well to the fore at a time when gas production methods are undergoing some vital changes; equally he fails to mention that the advertisement *does* indicate the types of plant in which Drakes specialise.

Similarly in criticising the Dunlop Rubber Co. Ltd. for an advertisement showing how their laboratories test the impact resistance of belting because the copy 'does not even say if the laboratories can be of use to the gas industry' Mr. Markham apparently assumes that the gas engineer has no idea what belting is used for on his works.

We believe that the general standard of advertising in the gas Press is extremely high and we know our readers study it. If Mr. Markham wants to obtain an *accurate* assessment of its effectiveness, we suggest that he carries out a little research on reader reaction.

OF CABBAGES AND KINGS

BY G. le B. DIAMOND

IT has been my lot to live through a time when men of capacity and often of colourful character ruled the fortunes of local gas undertakings with varying degrees of success. It is inevitable, therefore, that some of my observations highlight anecdotes relating to these rulers, and more particularly those who reigned in South-East England and were best known to me. I recall them in a spirit of kindly remembrance, even if occasional foibles come to light.

I have been earning my living for 50 years but not the whole of this time has been spent in the gas industry, for the First World War and other fortuitous circumstances gave me a late entry to the gas industry in 1919. I had relatives, however, in prominent positions in the industry and often visited gasworks before the First World War. In consequence, I carry a vivid recollection of the scene as it existed in the period 1910-1914, particularly in the South of England.

An incredible world

In the light of today, what an incredible world we look back upon with its incomparable rural scene. The hansom cab, the horse-drawn bus and the Victoria were still the normal form of transport in the urban areas, but the internal combustion engine was making rapid inroads and there were noisy and smelly motor buses operating on some of the principal routes in London and the provinces.

It was into this world that Dr. Carpenter and Philip Sugg burst with the introduction of a new and what seemed to be then a brilliant form of street lighting, achieved by means of a lamp containing a cluster of small mantles. There was an enormous demand for these lamps from 1910 onwards, not only for street lighting but for shop illumination, and the effect in London and the suburbs was quite remarkable. It was in fact a social revolution.

The arc lamp

About that time the electric arc lamp was making some inroads into the public lighting field, and many will recall the stuttering electric arc lamp as the automatic mechanism came into play to replace the carbon, the burnt-out end of which was ejected from the lamp and could, and sometimes did, cause burns to clothing or fires in horse-drawn vehicles. The new gas lighting was an effective competitor.

The gas industry of those days consisted of about 1,700 separate undertakings, either under municipal or company ownership. The industry earned modest profit and, in the case of the municipal undertakings, some of it was used for the relief of rates, although this was afterwards forbidden by legislation.

Company undertakings, except those which were non-statutory, mostly worked under the authority of private Acts and were subject to some form of price and dividend control, which put a premium on good management. It is surprising how quickly this has been forgotten, for in recent years I have been astonished to learn in private conversation with senior members of Government departments that they were unaware of the existence of this arrangement.

The undertakings owed a great deal to their chief officers, particularly the engineer. He was often an individualist and sometimes an autocrat. Many of them were well known in public life in their own localities. Moreover, they were often of an inventive turn of mind and designed their own plant or brought about improvement to existing equipment. In those days, nearly every young technical assistant in the industry could name the engineer of all the principal undertakings up and down the country for they were so well known. I wonder how many could do this today.

Works management was left in the hands of the assistant engineer, if there was one, and the works foreman ruled with a rod of iron, having learned his trade by long practical experience; his traditional badge of office was, of course, the bowler hat. Working hours were long indeed, but I have no recollection of complaint; everyone accepted the position.

Six o'clock in the morning was starting time and, in the winter months, by one of those strange dispensations of Providence that seem to exist in our British way of life, the workmen could get served at 5.30 a.m. with a nip of rum if they wanted it, in the nearby pub. It seemed to be recognised that all was legally in order if the lights were not on, and such illumination as was needed was provided by two candles on the counter. At any rate, this old custom had gone on unmolested for many years when I first came on the scene.

Young engineers were expected to spend part of Sunday morning on the works, although it was not taken amiss if some form of rota existed. As late as 1920, the Brighton undertaking where I started, as will presently

be explained, was still operating direct fired settings with round horizontal retorts, and it must have been one of the last of its size to do so. This meant that between 200 and 300 additional men had to be taken on in the autumn for hand-charging the retorts and cleaning the fires.

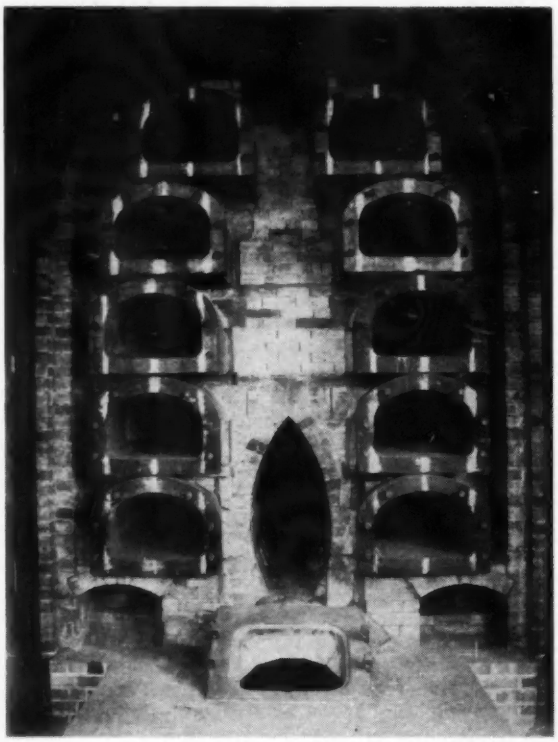
It so happened that this arrangement suited the labour market admirably, for in the summer months many of those engaged were employed in a variety of occupations such as driving traction engines and threshing machines, firing expensive steam yachts (of which there were then many round the coasts of the British Isles and in the Mediterranean), in the brickfields, or in straightforward agricultural work. There were no pensions and men worked as long as they were fit and able to do the daily round—sometimes up to the age of 80.

Drawing office work, chemical control, surveying and the setting out of engineering projects were all carried out by the articled pupils, of whom there were often several. Sometimes they worked to a carefully prepared schedule of training and sometimes they were left to acquire the art and practice as best they could. On the whole, however, the engineer treated his articled pupils very well and genuinely tried to train them. He also saw to it that they obtained instruction in theoretical subjects and took the appropriate professional examinations.

In the home, gas was booming, for which the credit prepayment meter installation and the so-called free fitting of appliances were largely responsible. Gas lighting was being lost, but in its place the space heating load was building up—with the improvement and development of the gas fire. The single-point water heater, or geyser as it was then called, in its copper-lacquered shell, was also bringing good business in water heating. Coke was doing well and by-products were all making a profit.

This was the position up to the outbreak of the First World War. Men of my generation were soon involved in this war and, after some trainee experience with the Essex Regiment, I became a second lieutenant and subsquently a captain in the Royal Flying Corps. Adventure then began for all of us in a big way. As everyone knows, the machines were very primitive in those days, with air frames constructed of wood covered with cambric doped with cellulose.

I had my share of what seem in retrospect to have been highly alarming experiences—a machine on fire in the air, a crash in the New Forest in the mist of a late November evening, an engine failure over Palmers shipbuilding yard at Jarrow, and a crash on Ashington



The retort setting at Portslade gasworks, Brighton . . . . 'my task was to design the retort setting, the mouth pieces and the top bench ironwork'.

colliery tip which brought me into violent contact with the coal industry!

After service in the Middle East I was lucky enough to come though the war and then resolved to enter the gas industry. It was my good fortune to be introduced to Arthur Matthews Paddon, chairman of the Brighton Gas Company, of whom there will be more to say. I became an articled pupil of Charles Herbert Rutter, then chief engineer at Brighton, a wholly delightful person to work for.

After several years, the young assistant engineer was involved in a really big task of designing, in every detail, a 4 mill. cu.ft. per day carbonising plant for the Portslade works, Brighton. Contractors were not employed and the whole of the drawings, design, construction of the settings and erection of the steelwork, were done by the company's own employees; there was no copying and everything was original. Subsequently, on September, 21, 1926, Mr. Rutter presented a paper to the Institution of Gas Engineers describing the development and reconstruction of Portslade gasworks. The costs, fully set out in the paper, amounted to £15,274 per mill. cu.ft. per day for the carbonising plant—a striking illustration of the inflationary spiral that has since come upon us.

There were three of us engaged on this work and my task was to design the retort setting, the mouth pieces and the top bench ironwork, while my colleagues did the rest of the reconstruction. One of them, Mr. L. V. Palmer, retired only a few weeks ago and another, Mr. D. L. Brown, occupies a prominent position in the aircraft industry to this day. In the event this was quite a considerable enterprise to be entrusted to young men, but it was a complete success and the retort settings were taken out of commission only about seven years ago.

The motivation for this episode came from the chairman, Arthur Matthews Paddon, who was a devoted disciple of Dr. Charles Carpenter, and was himself on the board of the South Metropolitan Gas Company. Dr. Carpenter was a firm believer in as much as possible being done by the company's own employees.

Mr. Paddon was by profession a civil engineer and a parliamentary barrister, with a background of classical scholarship with which were intermingled fantastic adventures not usually indulged in by the erudite. He had among other things been chief of the Constantinople Fire Brigade and engineer of the Smyrna Gas Company, to which he nearly sent me on one occasion. He was erecting engineer for Dr. Glasgow on the installation of the first carburetted water gas plant at Beckton in 1896, and his early career included a period when he was Joint Editor with Jerome K. Jerome of a humorous paper entitled *The Idler*. This was about the time of the publication of Jerome's book *Three Men in a Boat*.

A great enthusiast

Mr. Paddon was a great enthusiast of the gas industry but kept entirely out of the limelight and shunned publicity as some evil thing. Although he was a brilliant and witty speaker, his gifts were retained for the immediate private circle. On one occasion only do I remember his making a public speech and that was at the British Commercial Gas Association Conference at Brighton about 1937. It took the whole assembled company by storm and people could not understand why they had not heard of him before.

Mr. Paddon was one of a number of able men of outstanding capacity for whom I had the privilege of working in my early days and I owe him, as I owe them all, a great debt of gratitude. He was a colourful character, as were some of the others in different ways.

Mr. Paddon introduced me to Dr. Carpenter, president of the South Metropolitan Gas Company, with whom I was to have more contact later at Folkestone, where he lived at White Lodge, Sandgate. I still possess letters he wrote to me at that time.

A hot letter

He was very conscious of the fact that, being a staunch supporter of the gas industry, he ought not to have a coal range at Sandgate, but he was in an awkward situation for his cook, whom he could not contemplate losing, would not cook by gas. Dr. Carpenter sent for Sydney Flavel and asked him to make an exact replica of the coal range but with gas as the fuel and an oven thermostat. The range was duly made and delivered and Dr. Carpenter himself gave the instructions for setting the thermostat before going out for a drive one Sunday morning. When he returned the joint was not done and he was very angry indeed. 'The gas has failed', he said and wrote me a very hot letter.

Fortunately, the district was equipped with governor pits and recording gauges and there was one practically outside White Lodge. I therefore sent him the charts, which showed uniform pressure and accurate calorific value. They were not acknowledged but about 12 months afterwards I received a parcel from Dr. Carpenter containing a beautifully bound book with a

brief note. I asked Dean Chandler what it meant. He said: 'You are forgiven but you are never to mention this again.'

Mr. Frank Harding Jones, father of our esteemed Sir Henry Jones, also came into my life. Mr. Jones had a unique career having worked with Sir John Wolf Barry on the construction of Tower Bridge and also on the extension of the South Eastern Railway from Purley to Tattenham Corner. The chiefs of those days, although inclined to be autocratic and individualistic, were kind and helpful to younger men.

At exclusive clubs

Occasionally one could expect invitations to lunch or dinner at exclusive clubs and to be entertained by sparkling, witty conversation on a wide range of subjects. On one such occasion, Mr. Jones invited me to go immediately to take up a post in a South American Gas Company in which he was interested, but I could not accept the offer.

After nine very happy and profitable years at Brighton, the time came for my departure to the York Gas Company. I received news of my appointment as assistant engineer on top, of all places, of the newly erected waterless gasholder at Staines.

Mr. Bloor, my chief at York, was a colourful individualist if ever there was one. Endowed with a prolific brain, although sometimes not very practical, he was a bit of a handful for a young assistant engineer. I wonder what the young men of today would say if the chief called them round for a technical discussion at 11.30 at night, continuing to two or three o'clock in the morning and sometimes later, when the larder would be raided and fried egg and bacon produced. These late sittings were not allowed to interfere with due attendance at the gasworks in the morning for Mr. Bloor made it his business to find out if you were there.

Happy days

I was responsible for a great deal of reconstruction during my period at York and this, together with the task of coping with the inexhaustible flow of bright ideas from Mr. Bloor, kept me more than busy. We got on very well together, however, and when the time came for me to pass on to another place, I left York with genuine regret for my days there had been very happy.

While I was at York we erected the Klönne waterless gasholder, but I was never very happy about it for I did not think that it was the right place for a holder of this kind. It was a board decision, however, and I set about trying to do my best, including having it painted white to make it less conspicuous.

There were one or two experiences with this holder which are worth relating. Soon after it had been filled with gas for the first time it was discovered that the piston was tilting and there was a slight leak of gas from the piston ring which soon developed into something more serious.

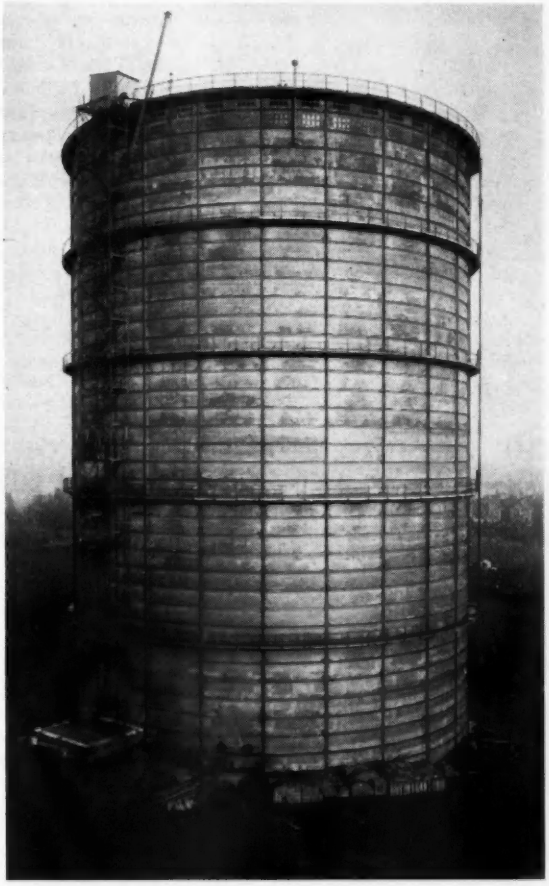
We sent for the Germans who came and inspected the piston in our company. We said to them: 'How much can you allow the piston to tilt?' They did not know. We said: 'But you have erected a number of these holders; you must have had this experience before.' They shook their heads and looked very uncertain.

We then said: 'How much can it be allowed to tilt?' They did not know. We then said (and we were standing on top of the piston): 'When do you run?' The Germans replied: 'We think now!' What we did not know then was that the Klönne piston is rigid and the cylindrical shell is slightly flexible and some tilt can be tolerated without misadventure.

On another occasion, I was called to the works soon after 4 a.m. on a winter morning. On my arrival there was a sound like thunder coming from the waterless gasholder, a most ominous and alarming noise. With hesitant and fearful tread, I climbed the 300 odd steps to the top and went down to the piston in the darkness to find out what was going on. A slight accumulation of ice on the cylindrical walls of the shell was causing the piston to hang up and then judder down.

There was no guidance on what should be done in a case of this kind and all I could think of was glycerine. Fortunately, York and Leeds have very large wholesale pharmaceutical chemists and we sent round and bought nearly the whole stock of glycerine in carboys to put round the piston ring. Happily this alleviated the trouble.

Then there was the lift incident. I had some part in designing this lift myself. It was for reaching the piston from the top of the gasholder and I was determined that it should have strong guide ropes.



The York Klönne waterless gasholder in course of erection.

We put toggle safety grips on the lift cage, such as are normally found on ordinary lifts with solid guides; the rope guides were counterbalanced with heavy weights situated outside the holder, which descended or were raised according to the height of the piston. The idea was that if a rope broke the cage would not fall through the top of the piston but would be caught by the guide ropes and held until the occupants could be rescued.

One day I was coming out from the piston with two young men who had been to inspect the holder, when suddenly there was a crash and the cage dropped about 3 ft. and was obviously caught by the toggle safety device. I could not see what had happened but was certain that the rope had broken, and then to my horror I felt the lift cage slowly slipping down the guide ropes, presumably on the grease.

I thought it could only be moments before the speed would accelerate and the cage would crash on the piston. In the event it was found that the rope had not broken but somehow or other had entered wrongly on to the winding drum and had run off the end of the drum. By the time we got out our collars were limp and we obviously required clean ones.

Down drains

It was in York that the effluent problem began to raise its ugly head and I seemed always to be going down drains. It was at York, too, that I owed my advent to the hospital world which was to occupy my spare time for many years to come. The York County Hospital grounds adjoined the curtilage of the York gasworks and the day arrived when the boiler plant at the hospital gave out and some emergency measures were required.

We ran a steam pipe over the wall and supplied them with waste heat steam, pending the building of a new boiler house. The new boiler house was not to be built for many, many years for the temporary supply of steam proved to be so satisfactory that both parties agreed to go on with it. It was profitable for the York Gas Company and it was moneysaving to the York County Hospital.

In East Kent

I was next appointed to be the engineer of several gas undertakings in East Kent then in the possession of the executors of the estate of the late Mr. Tilden Smith, a very wealthy man, who owned considerable interests in the Kent coalfield and had also been responsible for financing the building of Adelaide House, London Bridge. The reason for this appointment was that Mr. Tilden Smith had conceived the idea of putting in a low temperature carbonising plant to use Kent coal from one of his pits; the gas was to be supplied to the neighbouring gas undertakings.

He found that the chairmen and directors of the various gas companies in East Kent did not welcome this idea and many of them were reluctant to have anything to do with it for, among other things, the low temperature carbonising process had not been proved. So Mr. Tilden Smith proceeded to buy shares in the various gas companies and perform the function which is known today as the 'takeover bid', but then he died. My job was to try to cope with things until the executors decided what they were going to do. They did not tell me, but apparently they gave an option to a professional man in East Kent to sell the shares in the gas undertakings if he could get more than the late Mr. Tilden Smith gave for them.

At that time Dawney Days, of 15, Moorgate, were coming very much to the fore as an issuing house and as outstanding financiers. The professional character did a deal with Major Julian Day and I was sold overnight, together with all the assets and liabilities of some of the gas undertakings in East Kent. This was the foundation of the pre-war holding company movement. It was said that we were sold to pay off the mortgage on Adelaide House.

(To be continued)

BOOK REVIEW

THE INFLUENCE OF THE TYPE OF THE HYDROCARBONS IN TOWN AND GRID GAS ON THE COMBUSTION PROCESS IN GAS APPLIANCES

By Dipl.-Ing. K. O. Bosse,
Gaswärme Institut e.V., Essen-Steele

THIS is one of nearly 1,000 reports on research in all branches of applied science, which is being sponsored by the Ministry of Education of the State of North Rhineland-Westphalia.

The purpose of the present report is to establish how the tendency of gases to form soot varies when the type and the quantity of the hydrocarbons in the gas varies, and to determine the influence of the hydrogen content. Five grades of fuel were used for the tests, their composition being as follows:

No. 1, with 70% H_2, 13% CH_4, 15% CO, 2% N_2.
No. 2, with 60% H_2, 17% CH_4, 19% CO, 4% N_2.
No. 3, with 50% H_2, 21% CH_4, 23% CO, 6% N_2.
No. 4, with 40% H_2, 25% CH_4, 27% CO, 8% N_2.
No. 5, with 30% H_2, 29% CH_4, 31% CO, 10% N_2.

The hydrocarbons which were added to the above in percentages varying from 1 to 7% by volume were ethane, ethylene, acetylene, propane, propylene, butane, butylene, butadene, benzol, toluene and xylene. The test burner had an aperture of 5/64 in. (2 mm.) and was shrouded by a glass cylinder of 2¾ in. (60 mm.) diameter. The flame was allowed to impinge on a pyrex glass plate of 1¼ in. (32 mm.) diameter and ⅛ in. (3 mm.) thickness.

The amount of soot deposited was in all cases determined by optical means.

The tests showed that the hydrocarbons had a rising tendency to form soot in the order in which they were given earlier, i.e., putting the relative soot-forming coefficient for ethane as 1, it was 12 for xylene. Soot formation began at the moment when a hydrocarbon was added.

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THE QUEEN OPENS WESTFIELD PLANT

Royal tribute to the Scots gas industry

NEWS SUPPLEMENT

ABOUT 500 guests attended the official opening ceremony by the Queen on June 27 of the Scottish Gas Board's Westfield works, Fife. Among them were representatives of the Lurgi Geseelschaft fur Warmetchnik m.b.H., Frankfurt-am-Main, Germany, the South African Coal, Oil and Gas Corporation Ltd., Sasolburg, South Africa, and the Australia Gas Light Company Ltd., pioneers of the Lurgi complete gasification process.

Her Majesty unveiled a commemorative plaque and, in declaring the plant open, referred to the long and honourable history of the Scottish gas industry. She said that one of the first and most eminent of all gas engineers was a Scotsman, William Murdoch, born in Ayrshire more than 200 years ago.

The Queen said Scotland's greatest export had always been the industry and the genius of her sons, and true to this tradition Murdoch's inventions were exported southwards. His inventive spirit had now been repatriated.

'I am sure that he would be impressed by this plant and would recognise, in the enterprise of the Scottish Gas Board, and in the skill of the engineers, true signs of vitality in the industry he founded.

'Scotland has reason to be proud of this venture, which is the first of its kind in Great Britain. It will make full and economic use of the plentiful supplies of coal from the nearby opencast site—which I am looking forward to seeing later this morning.

FULL PRODUCTION

'When in full production it will supply nearly one-fifth of all the gas used in Scotland and, what is an important consideration, this great amount of energy will be distributed by high pressure pipelines, thus adding nothing to the congestion of the roads and detracting but little from the beauties of the countryside.'

The Queen congratulated the Scottish Gas Board and all who had a part in bringing the plant into operation. She expressed confidence that all who would operate it, in carefully planned and good working conditions, would be proud of the key position it held in Scotland's energy supplies and in the history of the gas industry.

Welcoming the Queen and Prince Philip, the Board Chairman, Mr. Sydney Smith, had said that Westfield was the most modern station producing gas from coal in the United Kingdom.

'It is entirely unorthodox and largely original in design; indeed, the works is unique in many respects, and it will play a major part in providing refined fuel to meet the expanding demands of Scotland.

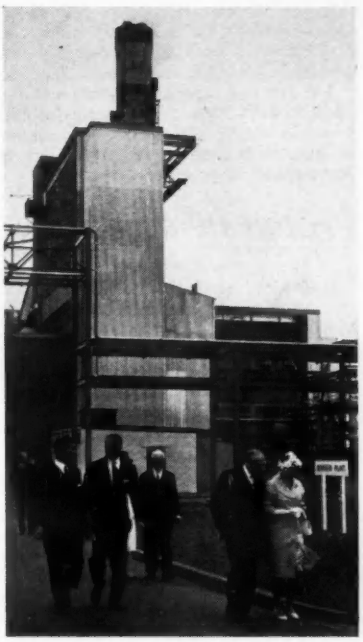
'The project is an outstanding example of the successful outcome of willing co-operation between two nationalised industries, and I would like to pay tribute to the helpfulness of the Opencast Executive of the National Coal Board in our negotiations for the provision of coal supplies from their adjacent workings.

GREATER DISTANCES

'The process of high-pressure gasification enables us to distribute gas over far greater distances than ever before. We are therefore constructing a supergrid connected to this works which will eventually distribute gas over more than 4,000 square miles of central Scotland: between Montrose in the north-east and the Ayrshire coast in the south-west.

'The whole project will greatly improve the economy of production and distribution; and enable the Board to fulfil their duty in rendering greater service to the people of Scotland.'

The plaque which the Queen unveiled



The Queen, accompanied by Mr. Sydney Smith, Chairman of the Scottish Gas Board, and Prince Philip, accompanied by Mr. T. S. Ricketts, Chief Engineer, on a tour of the Lurgi Plant. In the background is the Lurgi house.

Seven - year - old Moira Feenie, of Kinnesswood, who was chosen from 15 girls, presents a bouquet to the Queen. Moira is the daughter of a chargehand welder.

was designed by Mr. Tom Whalen, R.S.A., Edinburgh. Of contemporary design and made of bronze, it measures approximately 2 ft. 6 in. by 1 ft. 6 in. and is surrounded by a teak frame. Each corner of the plaque carries a decorative miniature Scots thistle.

The inscription in Roman lettering reads:—'This plaque was unveiled by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second on the 27th day of June, 1961, to commemorate the opening of these works.'

To mark the occasion of the official opening, Mr. Sydney Smith presented the Queen with a crowned-heart brooch of platinum, set with Scottish pearls and diamonds.

The gift is a replica of an 18th century 'luckenbooth' brooch, which was usually given as a betrothal gift. The original is in a collection in the Museum of Antiquities, Edinburgh.

POPULAR SELECTION

It was by the popular selection of the employees themselves that seven-year-old Moira Feenie of 5 Brough Terrace, Kinnesswood, was chosen from 15 girls to present the bouquet to the Queen. Moira is the daughter of a chargehand welder.

During the short tour of the works, the Queen was taken first to the coal-receiving area. It is here that a mixture of washed coal is delivered by railway wagon from the opencast site; and carried by conveyor belt to the gasifiers.

The Royal Party then made its way on foot past the boiler house and round the corner to the Lurgi house.

Here, in the gasifiers, coal, steam and oxygen are brought together at a pressure of 30 atmospheres to generate gas. Each gasifier produces upwards of 7.5 mill. cu.ft. of gas a day. Normally with the present output of the works, two gasifiers are in use with one as a standby.

AT CONTROL ROOM

The Queen and the Duke were taken by lift to the top floor to see where the coal enters a lock-hopper attached to the top of the gasifier.

Continuing their tour on foot, the Queen and the Duke called at the works control room. Here the output of gas from the plant is regulated and measured before entering the supergrid.

The Royal Party drove back to the Administration Office for coffee. Her Majesty signed a photograph of herself and the Duke of Edinburgh signed one of himself.

The Royal couple were invited to enter their names in the Visitors' Book and inspect a scale model of the plant and a coloured, illuminated map of the grid system.

This system, which is now under construction, will eventually enable gas to be distributed from Westfield and other large sources of supply through central Scotland over an area of approximately 4,000 square miles.

Wilson Committee Report: Minister's Statement

THE Minister of Power, Mr. Richard Wood, was asked in the House of Commons what further action he had taken on the report of the Wilson Committee.

He said the Wilson Committee was asked to make recommendations about the direction of further research and development work on promising processes for making gas, oil and chemicals from coal, and the type of organisation or organisations best suited to carry out such work.

Mr. Wood said he accepted the Committee's view that in this field town gas offered the greatest scope for expansion, but that to make this possible, new plants would have to make gas more cheaply than existing ones.

'I have therefore decided, in agreement with the Gas Council and the National Coal Board, to accept the Committee's recommendations that:

'(a) The development of high-pressure slagging gasifiers should be pursued.

'(b) The Gas Council should be responsible for further work on the standard Lurgi gasifier using British coals, on the Otto-Rummel gasifier and on any further gasifiers suitable for town gas.

'(c) The Gas Council should be responsible for development work on slagging gasifiers.

'(d) The National Coal Board should be responsible for work on producer gas plants.'

He added: 'I also accept the Committee's view that the prospects of making oil from coal economically in this country are so remote that no further technological work on the development of this process should be undertaken at present. The Department of Scientific and Industrial Research has consequently wound up its development work on this process but in accordance with the Committee's recommendations it is continuing basic studies on catalysis and is keeping in touch with developments in making oil from coal.

'My Department has been carrying out research and development on the slagging gasification of coal as a means of providing the raw material for oil synthesis.

'The Committee recognised the potential value of slagging gasification for making town gas and considered that the Gas Council should be responsible for the whole of the development work on slagging gasifiers. At the same time the Committee recognised that it would be difficult for the Gas Council to take over immediate responsibility for the work sponsored by my Department.

'I have therefore arranged for the work to be continued by my Department until March 31, 1962, when the Gas Council will become responsible for all work on this subject.

'The total gasification of coal is a matter of great concern to the National Coal Board which is anxious to do all it can, in co-operation with the Gas Council to promote its development.

'The Gas Council and the National Coal Board are making a joint economic study of the possibilities of the Lurgi process, which might later be extended to include slagging gasification.

'This study will help to define the scope for further development of the process and provide a basis for further co-operation between the Gas Council and the Board in the field of total gasification.'

PERSONAL NOTES

MR. G. L. MAY, solicitor to the South Eastern Gas Board, has been appointed Secretary to the Board. He will take up his duties on August 1, in succession to MR. R. G. HUXTABLE, who has been appointed Secretary of the Gas Council. Mr. May is 39 and was educated at Worcester College, Worcester, and Manchester University. Articled in East Lancashire before the war, his legal education was interrupted by six years of army service with the R.A.S.C. and the Gordon Highlanders. While with the R.A.S.C. he saw service in North Africa (where he was commissioned), Italy and North West Europe. Mr. May was admitted as a solicitor after the war and practised with a firm of City solicitors before joining the Board in October, 1949, as legal assistant. In January, 1951, Mr. May was appointed assistant solicitor, and solicitor in 1956. Mr. May, who lives at Bromley, Kent, is married and has a son and two daughters. In his leisure hours he likes sports, particularly rowing, canoeing and swimming, and he describes himself as 'an amateur dabbler in ciné-photography.'

MR. S. R. BADLEY has been appointed a Director of Extrudex Ltd.